ALBUMS

*****Indispensable ****Worth buying ***Worth listening to **Boring *Junk

THE NEW look Rainbow (again) with latest keyboard player David Rosenthal extreme right

Sheik, rattle and roll

RAINBOW
'Straight Between The Eyes'
(Polydor POLD5056)**

EGOMANIA OR merely dedication to the perfection of the serpent's egg, the Ritchie Blackmore debate will no doubt continue awhile yet. Whatever the final verdict, there can be no disputing that the current Rainbow lineup is as potent as any yet seen. Indeed, what king Dick appears to gunning his spit 'n' polished alchemy machine towards is a platinum-happy median mix of the poppy Graham Bonnet-era style, Americano rampage-rock hooks and just a pinch (no more, mind) of those garish instrumental pyrotech burns which he himself innovated, mastered (with Purple and after) and ditched a few yonkos back. Those still interested in that redundant Popular Mechanics *bilge should check out any Iron Midden album.*

Side the first boasts five variable slabs of attacking stink of the type calculated to upset serious rock writers with hardening circulation figures everywhere, viz: 'Death Alley Driver', not much of a tune but a nifty all-out whine amalgam of Brit/USA hardrock matrixes, leaning heavily to the former with a stock footage guitar et keyboard dorkhead prowess-strut duel and subscribing to the big band theory at the close.

Then 'Stone Cold' is icy, premasticated ersatz soul straight from the Foreigner mould, pompchord organ giving way to a short, itchy Ritchie soul-o. Follow that with 'Bring On The Night (Dream Chaser)', a halfway catchy shuffle ordinaire which might serve as a future 45 on a rainy day, the mediocre Free-funque of 'Tile Squeeze' and a fair tortuous trek over the slowmotion metallic wastelands of grunt 'n' groan balladry, called 'Tearin' Out My Heart', and you've got an uncommitted cynic (me) witholding his vote until something mean *shows up.*

And, praise the Lord, up it doth show at the very outset of the flippo, in the bone-crunching but candy coated shape of the magnificently shaking opus entitled 'Power'. Never has a title so concisely conveyed the essence of the bumph at hand. Starting with just ye olde axe and naught else, 'Power' boasts one of those riffs, like 'Louie, Louie' or 'Sweet Jane', which has a decidedly inevitable *feel to it, an unstoppable happy humpalong sassiness which screams H-I-T from every note. It builds and bubbles and falls way too short for everyone's good, which is always a neat sign. Undoubtedly the best thing here.*

'Miss Mistreated' is, sadly, the other side of the coin, pure filler drag with vocalist Joe Lynn Turner back on the Lou Gramm trail again, but fluffing the pose somewhat badly. But I suppose the diehard brain-haemorrhage mob have been waiting all through the blight for something like 'Rock Fever', a frantically indulgent piece of mesmerism short on tune but long on fret farce, where Blackmore wields his instrument like a Cobra charmer in India uses his flute. It's not the sound, it's the implication of the Strat, snakes being deaf and all. Ultimately music sans *fangs, despite Roger Glover's vivid open-heart production.*

What the discerning fan ought *to be delighting in (says I with confidence) is the experiment with lush, Arabian-borrowed textures in 'Eyes Of Fire', a lengthy campfire dance with swirling string effects and haunting high-register guitar bleeps by Blackmore, all sheik, rattle and roll. Maybe Ritchie heard Bowie's 'Secret Life Of Arabia' or (more possibly?) Nico's similar 'Drama Of Exile', both of which tread the same sands. Metal goes moody and all of Rainbow acquit themselves beautifully. Hey! Is this 'progressive'? Ulp. Naw. But it's a million flashbombs from the duff Rainbow of several years ago and a quantum leap towards what* any *great rock 'n' roll should be about.*

SANDY ROBERTSON

the most distinctive dubbery heard in years which beside the 'Coxsone King Of Dub Rock 2' record (reviewed elsewhere) makes most of those weary 'Galactic Showdown In Dub' efforts that are constantly being churned out sound as lame as Long John Silver with athlete's foot.

'NCOD' ignites into a blazing dubinferno with 'Dub Fire' where sparks of highly inflammable horn sound accompanied by a prowling bass beast are suddenly confronted by what sounds like a steel works in full production. The fire spreads on to 'Flickaflame' into which is incorporated a reverberating drum effect so fierce it could quite easily take the enamel off your teeth.

The most solid moments are to be found on the last two tracks of the second side. 'Natural Progression' becomes transmuted into 'Natural Aggression' and fires off a cavalcade of noise attack that lays bare the beating pulse of Aswad's young lion spirit. Tape loops melt into a whooping syndrum and piano opener before the whole rhythm goes up like a warehouse full of petrol bombs, exploding and imploding, swallowing itself down and spitting itself out in one glorious musicial show of strength where even the spaces between notes can be heard loud and proud.

The set bows out with an equally manic show of task force dub powertronics on 'Ghetto In The Sky' complete with spitting snare drum, aquatic guitar and thudding bass all oozing with layers of echo while Drummie pushes his kit through a series of rhythmic illusions with the grace and style of an abstract painter.

For me, this record works where 'New Chapter' failed. Together however, the picture becomes complete, implying that Aswad's next task is to combine both elements and forge them together into an album that will rock the world on its heels. It is clear they have the power and ability to do it. 'New Chapter Of Dub' is only a sampler for greater things to come.

EDWIN POUNCEY

loose ends 'NCOD' is also a top class quality stake in its own right with both Aswad and Michael (Reuben) Campbell producing this extra chapter, with final mixdown activity from Michael and (Angus) Drummie Zeb. The finished product is an eargasmic selection of some of